

# GENDER AWARENESS AND BELIEFS OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN ACEH

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated prospective English language teachers on gender awareness covering knowledge, attitude, and daily behavior and their beliefs about gender and its related issues. The study also calculated the association of all related variables. To find data, a survey was carried out and 152 university students as prospective English language teachers (N=114 females and 38 males) participated in filling the questionnaire administered. After analyzing the data several findings were found. In general, the respondents were overwhelmed with biased viewpoints. Their gender perspective can be considered critical. This was proven by the fact that the level of their gender perspective was low ( $= 2.3026$ ). This phenomenon was much related to their very low level of knowledge about gender and gender related issues ( $= 1.56$ ). The statistical analysis on this uncovered their significant association. The result also revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the level of gender perspective between males and females, in which males were more biased. Based on the findings, this study recommends that it be necessary to make attempts to address gender issues in ELT for the sake of better education for men and women.

## KEYWORDS

gender; gender awareness; gender belief; pre-service English teachers

## INTRODUCTION

Gender discrimination is a hot issue and has become a worldwide concern for a long time, including in Indonesia. As a country where Muslim as the majority,

ideally, gender discrimination would not be a concern. The Holy Quran, the guidance book of Muslim, has stated that Allah has created men and women in the earth to “*know one another*” (Q. S. Al-Hujurat [49]: 13). The two of them are like *libas* (body cover) to “cover each other”, to love and to protect each other (Q. S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 187). In the eyes of Allah, their status is equal; the difference is only on their piety (Q. S. Al-Hujurat [49]: 13). All these can be legal framework for gender discrimination abolishment. However, the fact shows otherwise. Gender discrimination practices still linger and occur in this country in every sphere of life, including in the education.

Despite many efforts from Indonesian government to abolish gender discrimination like the issuing of gender mainstreaming policy (President Decree No. 9/2000), gender bias practices still persist in practice in Indonesian educational system. According to Slavin (2006), there are three main ways in which gender bias is practiced in education, especially schools, namely (1) reinforcing stereotypes of gender, (2) maintaining the separation of the sexes, and (3) differentiating between boys and girls (Slavin, 2006: 120). The forms in which gender bias is often found are (1) at school activities, either in learning or interaction with school personnel, especially teachers, (2) in the textbooks used, (3) in the important decision-makers/school or education policy (the boss), and (4) separation system (Sadker, 1979).

Over decades, gender bias in education has been one of the main interests of researchers from many countries. To cite a few, we may mention the works of Michio (2008) and Nagamoto (2010) from Japan, Mirza (2004) from Pakistan, Jürges (2011) from Germany, Skliar (2007) and Amini (2012) from Iran, and Odén (2005) and Tegelström (2009) from Swedish. The issue also has attracted Indonesian researchers to investigate. The following two studies are the examples of studies about gender and gender-related issues in Indonesia focusing the existence of biases in the textbooks. Iwu Utomo and Peter McDonald et. al in 2008 investigated the extent to which textbooks in Indonesia contained gender bias. They found several important findings. One of the findings was that text books from Year 1 to Year 12 are heavily gender-biased; simple messages on sexual harassment and gender violence have been incorporated. More recent study about gender bias in a school textbook is conducted by Al Rasyidin (2010) from Medan under the title, *Bias Gender dalam Buku Pendidikan Agama Islam Sekolah Dasar*. Using inquiry qualitative approach and content analysis method, he investigated four PAI (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*) a. k. a. Islamic Teaching Books textbooks published by Esis, Yudistira, Tiga Serangkai and Erlangga. The study revealed that the four books contained gender bias messages in the form of marginalization, subordination, double burden, and stereotypes. In detail, the study uncovered that men were predominantly presented in the books.

While there have been a number of research about gender and gender-related issues focusing on the textbooks in Indonesia, only little research has been carried out about such issues related to other aspects, like teachers, especially pre-service

teachers. This study was intended to fill the gap. It was intended to explore the awareness and beliefs of pre-service English language teachers about gender and gender-related issues.

### **Justification of the Study**

Over decades, gender discrimination still becomes a worldwide concern in every sphere of life, including education. Cases like the school system and textbooks having been preoccupied with gender-stereotyped are the problems that still exist. Gender awareness is essential to solve these problems since gender awareness in teacher contributes to equity and equality in education and aims towards better education for men and women. On the other hand, without a positive attitude towards gender and gender related issues, our would-be English teachers who will always work with their male and female students will not be able to achieve genuine connections with them and leads towards an increase of quality of education for men and women. That was a reason that the present endeavor had been made in this direction to study the gender awareness and beliefs about gender and gender related issues among the pre-service English language teachers.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To explore the gender awareness of the pre-service English teachers about gender and its related issues.
2. To explore the gender beliefs of the pre-service English teachers about gender and its related issues.
3. To find the difference in terms of their gender awareness between male and female pre-service English teachers.
4. To find the relationship between their gender awareness attributes and their gender beliefs.

### **METHODS**

There were 152 students as pre-service English teachers (38 males and 114 females) participated in this study. They were all students of Department of English Language Education, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, State Islamic University of Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, coming from different levels of semester, ranging from semester four to seven. They filled out a questionnaire developed by the author based on literature.

The questionnaire used in the current study consisted three sections. Section I was aimed at obtaining the information about **subjects' personal details**. Section II was for gaining **students' gender perspective**. It consisted of 17 gender stereotyped beliefs statements widely spread in the society. Section III consisting of three aspects (knowledge, attitude and behavior) was intended for obtaining students' gender awareness. The questionnaire for knowledge aspect consisted of 19 items on **important to know**. The questionnaire for attitude aspect consisted of 19 items on **important to learn**. Finally, the questionnaire for behavior aspect consists of 20 items on **important to do or avoid**.

## ANALYSIS

All of the questionnaires used Likert scale. After all of the scores of gender perspective and awareness obtained from the subjects, the scores were then categorized into (1) Very Low, (2) Low, (3) High, and (4) Very High category. The gathered data were analyzed using Chi-Square test with SPSS for Windows version 17.

## FINDINGS

### Students' gender perspectives

The finding showed that in general, the students of English Department of UIN Ar-Raniry becoming the target of the investigation didn't have a good perspective. This was due to the fact that the mean of their level of gender perspective was 2.3026 in the category of "Low". As can be seen in table 1, the majority of the students (59.9%) preferred to choose item number 2 (low) indicating that they agreed to many stereotyped beliefs statements as their answer. Even, 5.3% students took item number 1 (very low) as their option. This suggested that predominantly the students were overwhelmed with bias perspective or the so called stereotyped beliefs.

Furthermore, there was a tendency that male students were more biased than their corresponding partner. As it is showed in table 1, more male students were in the category of "low" and "very low" since they had selected "agree" and "really agree" options for stereotyped belief statements (as a whole, 86.8% as against 66%). Meanwhile, there were only few of them in the category of "high" and "very high" compared to male students (as a whole, 13.1% as opposed 42%).

Table 1. The Gender Perspective level related to gender and related issues

		Gender Perspective Level				Total
		Very Low	Low	High	Very High	
Gender M	Count	7	26	4	1	38
	Expected Count	2.0	22.8	13.0	.3	38.0
	% within Gender	18.4%	68.4%	10.5%	2.6%	100.0%
	% within Gender Perspective Level	87.5%	28.6%	7.7%	100.0%	25.0%
F	Count	1	65	48	0	114
	Expected Count	6.0	68.3	39.0	.8	114.0
	% within Gender	.9%	57.0%	42.1%	.0%	100.0%
	% within Gender Perspective Level	12.5%	71.4%	92.3%	.0%	75.0%
Total	Count	8	91	52	1	152
	Expected Count	8.0	91.0	52.0	1.0	152.0
	% within Gender	5.3%	59.9%	34.2%	.7%	100.0%
	% within Gender Perspective Level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$$\chi^2 = 28.593 \quad d.f = 3 \quad p = 0.000$$

Further investigation then uncovered that the tendency of being biased between the two groups was quite high. It was found that its  $p = 0.000$  was less than  $0.005$  ( $p < 0.005$ ). This indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between male and female students in relations to their gender perspective. The fact that the  $p$  value of the behavior was less than  $0.005$  ( $p < 0.005$ ), this suggested that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted.

## THE LEVEL OF STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE, AND BEHAVIOR IN RELATION TO THEIR GENDER

### *Knowledge*

In general, the knowledge of the students about gender and its related issues was very poor. This is based on the result showing that the means of their knowledge level was only 1.58, in the category very low level. As can be seen in table 1, although there were 11 students having high knowledge of gender and its related issues, the majority of the students (male/68.4% and female/78.9%) showed the contrary. They chose item number 1 ('never heard') as their favorite answer. This suggested that predominantly the students didn't know about the issue.

Table 2. The knowledge level about to gender and related issues

			Cognitive Level			Total
			Very Low	Low	High	
Gender	Male	Count	26	10	2	38
		Expected Count	29.0	6.3	2.8	38.0
		% within Gender	68.4%	26.3%	5.3%	100.0%
		% within Cognitive Level	22.4%	40.0%	18.2%	25.0%
	Female	Count	90	15	9	114
		Expected Count	87.0	18.8	8.3	114.0
		% within Gender	78.9%	13.2%	7.9%	100.0%
		% within Cognitive Level	77.6%	60.0%	81.8%	75.0%
Total		Count	116	25	11	152

	Expected Count	116.0	25.0	11.0	152.0
	% within Gender	76.3%	16.4%	7.2%	100.0%
	% within Cognitive Level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$$\chi^2 = 3.687 \text{ d.f.} = 2 \quad p = 0.158$$

However, further investigation about the differences between the two groups reveals that there was no statistically association between students' Gender and their Knowledge about gender and related issues, in which  $p$  value is bigger than 0.005 ( $p > 0.005$ ). This indicates that both Male and Females had equal level of knowledge. And since  $p$  value was bigger than 0.005 ( $p > 0.005$ ), this suggests that  $H_0$  is accepted and  $H_a$  is rejected.

### ***Attitude***

Unlike the knowledge level, the attitude of the students about gender and its related issues was considered good. This was based on the result showing that the means of their attitude level was 2.88, in the category high level. As can be seen in table 1, the majority of the students (57%) chose item number 3 (important) as their favorite answer. Even, 22.4% students chose item number 4 (very important) as their answer. This suggested that predominantly the students considered that gender and its related issues were important to learn.

Furthermore, there is a tendency that the attitude of female students towards learning gender and its related issues is better than male. As can be seen in table 2, more female students chose "important" and "very important" as their preference (as a whole, 84.2% as against 68.5%) and less female students took "unimportant" and "very unimportant" as their options compared to male students (as a whole, 15.8% as opposed 31.5%).

Table 3. The attitude level towards gender and related issues

		Affective Level				Total
		Very Low	Low	High	Very High	
Gender Male	Count	3	9	18	8	38
	Expected Count	2.3	5.3	22.0	8.5	38.0
	% within Gender	7.9%	23.7%	47.4%	21.1%	100.0%
	% within Affective Level	33.3%	42.9%	20.5%	23.5%	25.0%
Female	Count	6	12	70	26	114
	Expected Count	6.8	15.8	66.0	25.5	114.0
	% within Gender	5.3%	10.5%	61.4%	22.8%	100.0%

% within Affective Level		66. 7%	57. 1%	79. 5%	76. 5%	75. 0%
Total	Count	9	21	88	34	152
	Expected Count	9. 0	21. 0	88. 0	34. 0	152. 0
	% within Gender	5. 9%	13. 8%	57. 9%	22. 4%	100. 0%
	% within Affective Level	100. 0%	100. 0%	100. 0%	100. 0%	100. 0%

$$\chi^2 = 4. 914 \text{ d. f} = 3 \text{ } p = 0. 178$$

However, further investigation uncovered that there was no statistically significant difference between males and female in relations to their attitude towards gender and its related issues, in which its  $p = 0. 178$  was bigger than  $0. 005$  ( $p > 0. 005$ ). This indicates that both males and female equally have the same level of their attitude despite their little tendency. And since its  $p$  value was bigger than  $0. 005$  ( $p > 0. 005$ ), this suggests that  $H_0$  is accepted and  $H_a$  is rejected.

### **Behavior**

As the case for the students' behavior, the finding showed their poor manner. The mean for this aspect was only 2. 29, in the category of "Low". The majority of the students selected item number 2 which indicated that they "rarely" did any activities supporting gender equality. The poor manner was not only showed male students, but also demonstrated by their counterparts. The fact gained its impetus since further investigation unrevealed that its  $p = 0. 446$  was much bigger than  $0. 005$  ( $p > 0. 005$ ) which meant that there was no statistically difference between them in relations to their behavior towards gender and its related issues. The fact that the  $p$  value of the behavior was bigger than  $0. 005$  ( $p > 0. 005$ ), this suggests that  $H_0$  is accepted and  $H_a$  is rejected.

Table 4. The behavior level towards gender and related issues

		Psychomotoric Level			Total
		Very Low	Low	High	
Gender Male	Count	14	20	4	38
	Expected Count	11. 0	23. 0	4. 0	38. 0
	% within Gender	36. 8%	52. 6%	10. 5%	100. 0%
	% within Psychomotoric Level	31. 8%	21. 7%	25. 0%	25. 0%
Female	Count	30	72	12	114
	Expected Count	33. 0	69. 0	12. 0	114. 0
	% within Gender	26. 3%	63. 2%	10. 5%	100. 0%
	% within Psychomotoric Level	68. 2%	78. 3%	75. 0%	75. 0%

Total	Count	44	92	16	152
	Expected Count	44.0	92.0	16.0	152.0
	% within Gender	28.9%	60.5%	10.5%	100.0%
	% within Psychomotoric Level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$$x^2 = 1.613 \quad d.f = 2 \quad p = 0.446$$

### The association between students' knowledge and their attitude, behavior and gender perspective

In this sub section, we try to see to what extent the knowledge of the students had any association to their attitude, behavior and gender perspectives. The findings can be seen respectively in table 5, 6 and 7.

Table 5. The association between knowledge and attitude

			Affective Level				Total
			Very Low	Low	High	Very High	
Cognitive Level	Very Low	Count	8	17	71	20	116
		Expected Count	6.9	16.0	67.2	25.9	116.0
		% within Cognitive Level	6.9%	14.7%	61.2%	17.2%	100.0%
		% within Affective Level	88.9%	81.0%	80.7%	58.8%	76.3%
	Low	Count	1	3	14	7	25
		Expected Count	1.5	3.5	14.5	5.6	25.0
		% within Cognitive Level	4.0%	12.0%	56.0%	28.0%	100.0%
		% within Affective Level	11.1%	14.3%	15.9%	20.6%	16.4%
	High	Count	0	1	3	7	11
		Expected Count	.7	1.5	6.4	2.5	11.0
		% within Cognitive Level	.0%	9.1%	27.3%	63.6%	100.0%
		% within Affective Level	.0%	4.8%	3.4%	20.6%	7.2%
Total		Count	9	21	88	34	152



Expected Count	9.0	21.0	88.0	34.0	152.0
% within Cognitive Level	5.9%	13.8%	57.9%	22.4%	100.0%
% within Affective Level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$$\chi^2 = 13.400 \quad \text{d.f.} = 6 \quad p = 0.037$$

In the case of the association between students' knowledge and their attitude, it can be seen table 5. From the table, it was revealed that there was no statistically association between the knowledge that the students had and their attitude. This was based on the fact that the  $p = 0.037$  was bigger than 0.005 ( $p > 0.005$ ).

Table 6. The association between knowledge and behavior

		Psychomotoric Level			Total
		Very Low	Low	High	
Cognitive Level Very Low Count		39	68	9	116
Expected Count		33.6	70.2	12.2	116.0
% within Cognitive Level		33.6%	58.6%	7.8%	100.0%
% within Psychomotoric Level		88.6%	73.9%	56.3%	76.3%
Low	Count	4	17	4	25
	Expected Count	7.2	15.1	2.6	25.0
	% within Cognitive Level	16.0%	68.0%	16.0%	100.0%
	% within Psychomotoric Level	9.1%	18.5%	25.0%	16.4%
High	Count	1	7	3	11
	Expected Count	3.2	6.7	1.2	11.0
	% within Cognitive Level	9.1%	63.6%	27.3%	100.0%
	% within Psychomotoric Level	2.3%	7.6%	18.8%	7.2%
Total	Count	44	92	16	152
	Expected Count	44.0	92.0	16.0	152.0
	% within Cognitive Level	28.9%	60.5%	10.5%	100.0%
	% within Psychomotoric Level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$$\chi^2 = 8.625 \quad \text{d.f.} = 4 \quad p = 0.071$$

From table 6, we can see that the findings showed no statistically association between the knowledge of the students had to their behavior. The fact that the  $p = 0.071$  which was bigger than 0.005 ( $p > 0.005$ ) was as the evidence.

Table 7. The association between knowledge and gender perspective

			Gender Perspective Level				Total
			Very Low	Low	High	Very High	
Cognitive Level	Very Low	Count	4	73	39	0	116
		Expected Count	6.1	69.4	39.7	.8	116.0
		% within Cognitive Level	3.4%	62.9%	33.6%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender Perspective Level	50.0%	80.2%	75.0%	.0%	76.3%
	Low	Count	4	12	9	0	25
		Expected Count	1.3	15.0	8.6	.2	25.0
		% within Cognitive Level	16.0%	48.0%	36.0%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender Perspective Level	50.0%	13.2%	17.3%	.0%	16.4%
	High	Count	0	6	4	1	11
		Expected Count	.6	6.6	3.8	.1	11.0
		% within Cognitive Level	.0%	54.5%	36.4%	9.1%	100.0%
		% within Gender Perspective Level	.0%	6.6%	7.7%	100.0%	7.2%
Total	Count		8	91	52	1	152
	Expected Count		8.0	91.0	52.0	1.0	152.0
	% within Cognitive Level		5.3%	59.9%	34.2%	.7%	100.0%
	% within Gender Perspective Level		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$$\chi^2 = 20.471 \text{ d. f} = 6 \quad p = 0.002$$

However, unlike the two others before, table 7 shows different phenomenon. The table illustrated that there was a statistically significant relationship between the students' knowledge and their gender perspective. The  $p = 0.002$  which was less than 0.005 ( $p < 0.005$ ) indicated that the biased perspective that the students had was related to their very low level of knowledge.

### The association between students' gender perspective to their attitude and behavior

In this sub section, we try to see to what extent the gender perspective that the students had any association to their attitude and behavior. The results are showed respectively in table 8 and 9.

Table 8. The association between gender perspective and attitude

			Affective Level				Total
			Very Low	Low	High	Very High	
Gender Perspective	Very Low	Count	0	2	3	3	8
		Expected Count	.5	1.1	4.6	1.8	8.0
		% within Gender Perspective Level	.0%	25.0%	37.5%	37.5%	100.0%
		% within Affective Level	.0%	9.5%	3.4%	8.8%	5.3%
	Low	Count	8	13	51	19	91
		Expected Count	5.4	12.6	52.7	20.4	91.0
		% within Gender Perspective Level	8.8%	14.3%	56.0%	20.9%	100.0%
		% within Affective Level	88.9%	61.9%	58.0%	55.9%	59.9%
	High	Count	1	6	34	11	52
		Expected Count	3.1	7.2	30.1	11.6	52.0
		% within Gender Perspective Level	1.9%	11.5%	65.4%	21.2%	100.0%
		% within Affective Level	11.1%	28.6%	38.6%	32.4%	34.2%
	Very High	Count	0	0	0	1	1
		Expected Count	.1	.1	.6	.2	1.0
		% within Gender Perspective Level	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% within Affective Level	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.9%	.7%

Total	Count	9	21	88	34	152
	Expected Count	9.0	21.0	88.0	34.0	152.0
	% within Gender Perspective Level	5.9%	13.8%	57.9%	22.4%	100.0%
	% within Affective Level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$$\chi^2 = 9.624$$

$$d.f = 9$$

$$p = 0.382$$

Table 9. The association between gender perspective and attitude

			Affective Level				Total
			Very Low	Low	High	Very High	
Gender Perspective Level	Very Low	Count	0	2	3	3	8
		Expected Count	.5	1.1	4.6	1.8	8.0
		% within Gender Perspective Level	.0%	25.0%	37.5%	37.5%	100.0%
		% within Affective Level	.0%	9.5%	3.4%	8.8%	5.3%
	Low	Count	8	13	51	19	91
		Expected Count	5.4	12.6	52.7	20.4	91.0
		% within Gender Perspective Level	8.8%	14.3%	56.0%	20.9%	100.0%
		% within Affective Level	88.9%	61.9%	58.0%	55.9%	59.9%
	High	Count	1	6	34	11	52
		Expected Count	3.1	7.2	30.1	11.6	52.0
		% within Gender Perspective Level	1.9%	11.5%	65.4%	21.2%	100.0%
		% within Affective Level	11.1%	28.6%	38.6%	32.4%	34.2%

Very High	Count	0	0	0	1	1
	Expected Count	.1	.1	.6	.2	1.0
	% within Gender Perspective Level	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within Affective Level	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.9%	.7%
Total	Count	9	21	88	34	152
	Expected Count	9.0	21.0	88.0	34.0	152.0
	% within Gender Perspective Level	5.9%	13.8%	57.9%	22.4%	100.0%
	% within Affective Level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$$\chi^2 = 10.445 \quad d.f = 6 \quad p = 0.107$$

The two tables above have showed us that students' gender perspective had no statistically association either with their attitude or with their behavior. This suggests that their high level of attitude and their poor manner supporting gender equality might not due to their biased perspective.

## DISCUSSIONS

This study finds that the university students becoming the subjects of the investigation had high level of biased perspective. This is proved by the results of the survey showing that the level of their gender perspective was mean 2.3026 in the category of "Low". Further investigation then shows that compared to female students, male students had higher level of biased perspective. The difference was very significant.

The results of investigating gender awareness were also disappointing since except their attitude, their knowledge and behavior were in the level of inadequate. Furthermore, in general the results of investigating the students' gender awareness showed no differences between males and females in terms of their knowledge, attitude and behavior levels. This suggested that both males and females had equal level of gender awareness. Further investigation then showed no statistically association between the level of their knowledge, attitude and behavior. This was based on the fact that although students' gender attitude towards gender and its related issues was relatively high, their knowledge was very low. Their good attitude didn't have any contribution to their behavior since the level of their behavior was in the category of bad.

To obtain the association between the perspective and gender awareness, this study tries to see the association between the perspective with students' knowledge, attitude and behavior. The results then showed that there was statistically significant association between students' low gender perspective and their low level of knowledge. This suggests that students' low gender perspective might due to their low level of knowledge. However, the results also showed that there was no statistically significant association between the students' gender perspective with their attitude and behavior.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding showing that the level of the students' biased perspective was high and their level of gender awareness was low, there should be a serious attempt to improve their gender perspective and awareness. As future teachers (pre-service teachers), the students should have adequate gender perspective in order that they could provide equal education to their future male and female students. Therefore, it is recommended that the big plan of developing a teaching model to promote gender equality be necessary to execute.

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